21: Belshaw E-5 (1951) 1951 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23
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as a first step in their wider rehabilitation. Lectures were given by Europeans, adult illiterates were taught the three " r's," sports were organised, and as a welfare measure the old people were given prepared meals in a " soup kitchen." Once again the response was enthusiastic, indicating a real demand. As refugees moved out of the camp back to villages, it was common for young men who had missed their Mission schooling, or who considered that schooling to be insufficient, to return to Ilimo for the sole purpose of continuing their instruction. Unfortunately, under the unsettled conditions they had to be sent home again.

As soon as the danger area had been determined villages outside it were re-started, leaving only 1,500 people at Ilimo by April. These 1,500 people were not permitted to return to their village sites except under special passes to obtain garden produce. An administrative officer was detailed to undertake research into native land tenure and social groupings in the area with a view to determining sites for re-settlement.[1] As a result of his recommendations these refugees were returned to certain areas of land which they were said to own, or which had been granted to them by neighbouring villages. Women remained at Ilimo until shelters had been erected for them, but by June they had rejoined their husbands and the camps were evacuated. A Government patrol post was set up at Saiho in the centre of the evacuation area, and medical facilities were transferred to Saiho from Ilimo.

The policy behind these moves was aimed at re-establishing gardens in the shortest possible time, and the building of an improved style village-system. In addition consideration was given to the possibility of large-scale community development. But there were many difficulties in the way, and the method of carrying out the policy often created further difficulties.

In *Orokaiva Society* Williams characterises the people as being fierce fighters but gentle and harmonious in their domestic and intra-group relations. Whether or not that was true twenty years ago, Europeans with recent experience of them say that they are now highly excitable, with rapidly inflamed tempers which, however, quickly subside. When under the influence of temper they are said to be violent, and to vent their violence on people near at hand, particularly wives. There is a tendency towards suicide in the case of disappointed love or the loss of children, and they will throw hysterical fits. In view of these conflicting accounts it is impossible for me to judge whether the emotional activity I observed after the volcano was a mere passing phase or represented deeper emotional states. At the same time there were a number of influences present which certainly did nothing to reduce nervous tensions.

It is not difficult to describe these. The people were in refugee camps, and the atmosphere of refugee camps is almost always one of strict control, in contrast to the freedom of village life. Work had to be found to keep people occupied, and much of it was camp erection work that had no clear or immediate relevance to the desire

[1] See memorandum by H. T. Plant, " Re-Establishment of Isivita Villages," March 24, 1951, with Map and Appendices on Land Ownership, Class and Tribal Groupings.

731 did not encourage this belief but spoke of the eruption as a natural
784 disaster. Certainly this is how Orokaiva often speak of it today,
especially when they wish to give the impression of being modern and
[777] educated. Papuans close to the Mission invariably speak of it as a
natural disaster.

A group of elderly people in Sivepe, however, produced a quite different theory when I interviewed them in 1966. They explained the eruption by the anger of the god Sumbiripa. I was told that this explanation was the generally accepted one at the time of the disaster. At Hoborita, I was likewise told that the people, at the time of the eruption, thought of the anger of Sumbiripa, though later they learned it had been a natural disaster. My Sivepe informants, however, added
[719] a refinement. Before Sumbiripa blew up, he gave two signs. To the Isivita people and those of the Sasembata district he made a sign of blue fire, which meant that these people would be saved. To the Sangara people, he gave a sign of red fire, which meant that they all died. The reason for his anger towards the Sangara people was that they used to throw hand bombs and shoot guns on the mountain. This theory has the advantage of explaining the facts more closely than the theory of the anger of the Christian God; it is easier to believe that Sumbiripa discriminated between the two tribes than that the Christian God should do so.

731 Before attempting to draw these rather various interpretations
152 together under a common theme, I shall refer briefly to F. E. Williams' extremely cogent discussion on the Orokaiva's general attitude to guilt, for which I myself collected much additional documentation. When an Orokaiva is wronged he displays a state of mind called sisiire.
[762] A person who is sisiire withdraws, refuses food, destroys his own property, may even commit suicide. By displaying his sorrow, he hopes to shame the person who has wronged him. When a person is spoken to roughly, he will feel sisiire, "ashamed." It is the normal reaction to being punished. The purpose is invariably to make the other party feel sorry for what he has done. There is something of that feeling in Father Albert's songs. The main mood is not so much contrition as the hope that the singer will make God feel sorry. This is not quite the same as what we understand by "guilt." All Belshaw's evidence suggests that the Orokaiva people after the eruption felt very sisiire.

Certainly, the eruption would be followed by a resolve not to
731 make the harsh power that brought the eruption angry again. Whether
784 this power was primarily identified with God or with Sumbiripa is
777 extremely hard to tell; it is even harder to tell whether these powers were viewed as being entirely distinct. Father Albert's testimony strongly suggests that the eruption was treated as symbolic of divine wroth as it was presented in the Bible. I have argued earlier that the Orokaiva look upon the Europeans as a new kind of culture heroes. The new dispensation brought not only new wealth and new knowledge, but also new wroth: Honckton's conquest, the world war, the eruption. It does not seem far-fetched to assume that the disaster was taken as

or even force Orokaiva settlement patterns from the traditional scattered hamlet system to village or even town living. Another tough question was how far Government should step in to supervise matters of economic and social welfare, including elementary schooling which hitherto policy had left almost wholly to the Anglican Mission. The majority of the mountain Orokaiva are now adherents of this Mission, the only body operating in the area. Questions relating to land tenure, social group realignment, leadership, law and order, and other matters involving local custom had also to be faced, especially in the course of the first experiments in resettlement.[4]

Officials and Mission workers reported that the explanations of the "cause" of the disaster given to them by Orokaiva, were, in general, of a supernatural nature: "God" was punishing them for "sins" such as "not supporting Mission and Government plans for development," "not building new churches as requested by the Bishop," or "not helping the Allies enough during the war." However much these may have pleased the hearers, the fact seems to be that there were resulting strong feelings of insecurity and even of guilt in their retrospective look at the pre-eruption way of life.[5] Officials who know the Orokaiva considered that these feelings undoubtedly helped to foster the extraordinary degree of cooperation and orderliness in situations where large numbers of people were necessarily herded together and shifted around without benefit of the traditional niceties and proprieties.

This raises the whole problem of interpreting the overt events here summarised in terms of their cultural and individual contexts. In discussing theory relating to the dynamics of change and resistance to change, the writer, along with others, has referred elsewhere to the general tendency for peoples to be pre-conditioned by the characteristic sets of their culture and personality norms, to be differentially "adaptable" or responsive to change in the face of new experiences.[6] The impression gained in this case is that subject to inevitable factors of shock and disorganization, the Orokaiva were culturally predisposed to respond to the traumatic experience here described with something approaching maximum adaptability.

The mountain Orokaiva are shifting cultivators, and supplement their staple food, taro, with sweet potato, yam, banana and sugar cane. Flesh from domestic pigs, chickens, dogs, and wild game is what Williams calls "a dainty rather than a diet." "Fresh ground," says this ethnographer, "is continually cleared for new plantings" in the typical pattern

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4. These matters are discussed particularly by C. S. Belshaw, an anthropologist working in Papua under the auspices of the Australian National University Research School of Pacific Studies, as a result of a visit to the area in April, 1951; see his "Social Consequences of the Mount Lamington Eruption," *Oceania*, 21, 4, pp. 241-252 (1951). This article was not seen until after the first draft of this paper was completed, and as the approach is considerably different the two papers are complementary rather than unduly overlapping.

5. Belshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 242, stresses this "guilt" factor.

6. F. J. Keesing, "Some Notes on Acculturation Study," Sixth Pacific Science Congress, *Proceedings*, IV, pp. 59-63 (Berkeley, 1940); "Cultural Dynamics and Administration," Seventh Pacific Science Congress, *Proceedings*, 14 pp., mimeographed (New Zealand, 1949).

to get out from under the direct control of Government and that everything was "subordinated to this end." Those who had title to land outside the closed area and wished to get to it, readily agreed to official plans for resettlement, including the village building program. Those whose land was inaccessible—too far off the road or in the danger area—attempted to obtain permission to occupy land of kinsmen or others who might be willing. The most immediate objective was to break in gardens and to reduce or eliminate the need for rations, emergency wild foods, or daily treks into the closed area for salvage produce. Here difficult problems are foreshadowed. This pattern of settlement will be possible only on a short term basis. For longer occupation the people will either have to scatter out in widening areas to make their further seasonal shifting gardens, or else make the radical change to sedentary gardening which has no appeal to most of them.

The situation is made more serious by the fact that the safe land tracts are, in general, less fertile than the devastated higher slopes; these and comparable areas elsewhere do not carry such relatively dense settlement.[9] Mr. H. T. Plant, an officer with anthropological training, made a quick survey of land tenure and social structure in the resettlement zone on the Wairopi side. On this basis he estimated that with only about five acres at hand per person, or approximately 100 people to the square mile, the available land is inadequate by New Guinea standards to support the population. In April, Belshaw found that great uncertainty surrounded land use problems. There were frequent moves, uncertain titles, disputes over tenure, and conflicting authority among the hamlet and clan leaders. He predicted that it might take months to sort out the economic and social threads involved. It will take far longer to build up seed stock, domestic animal herds, and other bases for normal living, as well as the large quantities of food required for the proper ceremonies for the dead which will eventually be held. In due course other settlement areas than those immediately occupied will need to be found for people still in the camps.

Government and Mission personnel were ready to offer judgements on Orokaiva behavior in the crisis situation, and camp records had some objective data to the extent that people broke the law, entered hospital with wounds, or otherwise came under official purview. In addition to the "sense of guilt" already mentioned, there was said to be considerable "anxiety," "irritability," "excitability," and "quarreling." The legal record shows several sharp clashes where injuries were inflicted, wife-beatings, and other kinds of quick tempered violence. Under extreme provocation, it was said that they might "throw hysterical fits." An obvious source of early tension came from not knowing the fate of missing clansmen. Officials denied knowledge of any significant mental derangements beyond the scattering of instances known previously.

The Oro Bay camp inhabitants appeared to be under by far the most stress and strain. Here, out of sight of the

9. Williams, after referring to the rich Lahiagusa slopes, says: "A somewhat discouraging contrast is found in the forests of the plain proper, which are sometimes gloomy and waterlogged . . . and of wholly inferior quality" (*Orokaiva Society*, p. 12).

mountain, wholly on official rations, and with nothing to do, the people were a prey to all kinds of rumors as to what was going on elsewhere. Furthermore, these mountain people apparently could not conquer a fear of the sea, and this was reinforced by a rumor that a supernatural "tidal wave" was to occur along the coast. The camp director told how every night the more timid scattered on to the higher ground rather than sleep in the camp on the foreshore. Prior to the liquidation of this camp the authorities sent one of the leading men back to the big Ilimo camp and the home area so that he could return with a factual account of conditions and allay the other inmates' fears as far as possible. A strong current of tension running through this whole situation was: "What does Government intend to do?" All these behavioral conditions appear psychologically congruent with the long term personality norms.

The new group alignments of the camps and resettlement areas presented interesting tests as to how far larger aggregations could be structured effectively enough to show promise of permanence. This matter is particularly crucial to policy, and constitutes the major challenge from the viewpoint of "applied anthropology." Reference has been made in the foregoing to a controversy which arose as to whether this would be an appropriate occasion to resettle the survivors in centralized communities, or to allow them to scatter as before in a dispersed pattern of settlement consistent with safety. Some officials resented the idea that the catastrophe should be used to "put over" anything other than those rehabilitation operations that are in line with the habits and sentiments of the people. On the other side was an opposing official viewpoint, and a powerful Mission sentiment, that it would be in the long term interest to take the opportunity to concentrate the surviving Orokaiva into a small number of population centers, with proper welfare and other services. The first village building program represented something of the latter viewpoint, though some even visualized bringing the people into a handful of large town-like communities, much like the Ilimo camp-settlement, with cooperative agriculture and other modernization. The Orokaiva, so far as their views had been, or could be obtained, appeared to have no crystallized opinion. Because of the factors playing upon them, they were for the time being particularly susceptible to the suggestions of those official and Mission workers who brought the enthusiasm of reformers to the cause of concentration.

The writer was asked to give an opinion on this matter. The following points seemed clear, even from a quick view:

1. The loosely organized Orokaiva society has no significant pre-existing socio-political institutions and loyalties beyond the immediate kinship and hamlet alignments. A camp concentration, therefore, remained a congeries of traditional groups, each dealing with Government authority through its senior leader. Officials said that a few particularly strong men of super-local reputation were tending to take leadership in speaking when the "headmen" were brought together for informal camp "councils." But essentially, for purposes of issuing ration and other activities, each small group had to be dealt with as a unit, and otherwise kept its integrity. Here and in the newly formed villages, Government de-